



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

EcoNewsWire

Environmental Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Compost on Iowa Capitol lawns to help improve soil quality and promote cleaner water

MEDIA CONTACT: Steve Konrady, DNR, at 515-725-8388 or steven.konrady@dnr.iowa.gov.

DES MOINES — In a partnership with the DNR and other state agencies to improve soil quality and reduce stormwater runoff on the Iowa Capitol grounds, crews will be applying layers of compost on the State Capitol Terrace lawns the week of Sept. 11.

The soil quality restoration project will help rainwater better soak into the Capitol lawns, and that reduces the amount of runoff, which can carry pollutants, into storm sewers that empty into the Des Moines River. In addition, the lawn should green up better than before in just a few weeks.

Crews will be blowing dark-colored compost onto the Capitol lawns to the west of the Capitol building. It should take about two weeks for the compost to break down into the soil and become less noticeable. This process also increases soil health in lawn areas with highly compacted soil or thin topsoil.

“Soil quality restoration is something that people can do in their own backyards as well to improve the water quality in their neighborhood creek or other local waterbody. It also makes their yard look great, too,” said Steve Konrady with the DNR’s Watershed Improvement Program. “Some communities in Iowa offer assistance to homeowners for this practice, and this Capitol Terrace project is a great opportunity to demonstrate the practice to Iowans, and to work to improve state lands and waters, and cleaner water downstream.”

The project is a partnership effort between the Iowa DNR, the Iowa Department of Administrative Services, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with technical assistance from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship urban conservation program.

Meetings to discuss water quality improvement plan for the Iowa River

MEDIA CONTACT: Jeff Berckes at (515) 725-8391 or jeff.berckes@dnr.iowa.gov.

IOWA CITY – Iowans interested in the results of a DNR study to improve water quality in the Iowa River and its tributaries can attend one of three meetings across the basin. Citizens are encouraged to bring their questions and ideas to improve the river to the meeting for discussion.

Multiple segments of the Iowa River and many of its tributaries are on the state's list of impaired waters for high levels of indicator bacteria. The current study, or DNR water quality improvement plan, shows where the bacteria comes from and how these problems can be addressed.

The plan explores the amounts and sources of bacteria entering the river system and offers potential solutions to reduce those levels and work toward fixing the problem. The document is designed as a guide for local resource agencies, partners, stakeholders and residents to improve the river system. Staff from the DNR's Watershed Improvement Program will be on hand to answer questions.

The meetings will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the following dates and locations:

- Sept. 20, Eldora Public Library, 1202 10th St., Eldora
- Sept. 26, Marshalltown Public Library, 105 W. Boone St., Marshalltown
- Oct. 4, Coralville Public Library, Schwab Auditorium, 1401 5th St., Coralville

Those not able to attend the public meeting can receive more information at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WatershedImprovement/WatershedResearchData/WaterImprovementPlans/PublicMeetingsPlans.aspx> and submit comments on the plan by Oct. 23 via:

E-mail: jeff.berckes@dnr.iowa.gov

Mail: Jeff Berckes, care of Iowa DNR, Wallace State Office Building,
502 E. Ninth St. Des Moines, Iowa 50319

After gathering Iowans' comments, the DNR will forward the final plan, also called by its technical name of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval.